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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2757  
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SUBJECT: Avian Flu: Jordan Takes Major Steps in Planning, Training, Outreach

Ref: A) Amman 2156 B) Amman 2358

11. (SBU) During the summer of 2006, the GOJ continued to invest in avian influenza (AI) planning and preparedness measures, and is significantly further along in its preparations now than it was last year at this time. A major train-the-trainers program and an AI public awareness campaign began in early November. NOTE: Post's AI Task Force continues to meet regularly and assess Jordanian AI readiness, as well as Post's own AI contingency preparations. End summary.

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GOJ Updates Preparedness, Continues Training Program  
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12. (SBU) USAID/Jordan's Health Office FSN reported at post's October 22 AI Task Force meeting that Jordan's National Avian Flu Preparedness Plan has been revised extensively over the past several months; the GOJ's National Technical Committee has met four times in the past six months. The updated version of the Preparedness Plan will be done only in Arabic; post will obtain a copy when it is available. The fall 2005 version of Jordan's Preparedness Plan was translated into English, but our GOJ contacts have said it is simply too burdensome for them to translate the increasingly long and technical document.

13. (SBU) The Ministry of Health (MOH) has now updated definitions for suspected, probable and confirmed cases of AI that follow the WHO's case definition of August 29, 2006. This information was included in a national train-the-trainers program of 150 health workers held November 5-13. These trainers will subsequently train other staff in all public and private hospitals in Jordan. A national communication campaign to promote awareness and promote behavior changes started at the beginning of November, and will run through December 2006.

14. (SBU) The GOJ has also finalized its case investigation and case management protocols. A national experts committee on treatment has been appointed. The MOH has three million Tamiflu tablets and 100 kilograms of Tamiflu powder in stock. MOH estimates this can cover 5% of Jordan's population, somewhat below the 10% percent level recommended by WHO. The MOH provided post with a list of the key laboratory staff at the regional hospitals that are approved to run "rapid tests" for AI. Only Amman's Al-Bashir Hospital has the equipment and expertise needed to run real-time PCR tests.

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Agriculture Ministry Adding Veterinarians  
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15. (SBU) FAS FSN reported to post's AI Task Force that the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) says it is "ready this year" if AI recurs. USDA's APHIS trained two MOA veterinarians on PCR testing at the U.S. Navy's NAMRU-3 lab in Cairo. APHIS also sponsored a Jordanian to attend an AI workshop in Fort Collins in September 2006. MOA has hired 84 new veterinarians, of whom thirty will specialize in combating AI. MOA has also developed a contingency plan with a policy section, a risk assessment, and standard operating procedures.

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Task Force Reviews Situation, Stresses Preparedness  
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16. (SBU) At the most recent meeting on Post's AI Task Force on October 22, ECouns, who serves as Task Force POC, summarized Jordan's good performance in March and April 2006 in responding to H5N1 cases in poultry (ref A) and humans (ref B), and stressed the importance of individual responsibility and preparedness through personal hygiene and stockpiling food and water. ESTH Officer described the work of the Avian Influenza Action Group (AIAG) and the International Partnership for Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI). He urged public diplomacy outreach from everyone in the AI Task Force to the broader community, especially to carry the message that families should stockpile twelve weeks of food and water.

17. (SBU) CDC Resident Advisor summarized the epidemiology of AI, saying that Indonesia is currently the hotspot, and that AI is also active in Egypt and Thailand. He noted that vaccine research is under way, but that an effective vaccine cannot be developed until

sustained human-to-human transmission begins, making it difficult to produce enough vaccine to immunize large numbers of people.

18. (SBU) Regional Medical Officer (RMO) added that Post now has 8,160 Tamiflu tablets on hand, and that the number of "courses of treatment" would depend on the circumstances and medical advice existing at the time of any outbreak. RMO emphasized the importance of personal hygiene and social distancing in the event of AI emerging locally, and reinforced the message that shelter-in-place may be the best option during a pandemic.

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